

**BOURDIEU IN 'ARROZ CON HABICHUELAS': LINGUISTIC MARKERS OF STATUS IN PUERTO
RICAN FOOD MENUS**

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Abstract

The existing body of research on food culture and social class suggests a strong association between the language used in gastronomic contexts and social distinctions (Bourdieu, 1984, 1986; Jurafsky et al., 2016). Scholars such as Pierre Bourdieu have emphasized taste's economic and social determinants, illustrating how cultural practices, including food choices, reflect social hierarchies and identity (Bourdieu, 1984). Similarly, Dan Jurafsky's work on the language of food descriptions has highlighted how linguistic choices can convey social meanings and distinctions (Freedman & Jurafsky, 2011; Jurafsky et al., 2016). However, there is a need for more research regarding the linguistic markers of status in different cultures. This study aimed to unveil the language-based culinary manifestations of class within the Puerto Rican context, an area that has received limited scholarly attention thus far. Aspects studied in Bourdieu and Jurafsky's work were employed to analyze the menus from two restaurants with the same price range, cuisine, and similar names, but located in contrasting areas of the island— San Juan and Caguas— to provide insights into how linguistic choices on menus reflect social distinctions within the Puerto Rican setting.

Preliminary findings reveal that the restaurant in the capital city (San Juan) aligns with most of the distinctions typically associated with more expensive establishments, such as more complex language having fewer options, and using “natural” authenticity markers, as identified in previous research. On the other hand, the restaurant in Caguas emphasized “traditional” authenticity and the aspect of ‘plenty,’ factors usually linked to the working class meal. These results can be attributed to factors such as geographic location, target audience, and other contextual influences. The significance of conducting a study of this nature extends to multiple stakeholders, including the Puerto Rican community, the business sector, and the field of linguistics. It offers valuable insights into the interplay between food culture, social class, and linguistic choices within the Puerto Rican environment.

Key Words: Puerto Rico, food culture, linguistic markers, status, menus, Bourdieu, Jurafsky

Introduction

Food and language are ubiquitous aspects of human existence. The acts of eating and communicating play crucial roles in forming social hierarchies and reflecting distinctions related to class, ethnicity, and wealth disparities. Our language choices and culinary preferences are not solely the product of individual decisions, but are heavily influenced by the society we inhabit and our aspirations to fit into a certain position within that community (Gerhardt, 2013). Therefore, food represents a fundamental aspect of culture, intrinsically tied to notions of identity and socioeconomic status, rendering it a significant domain of study within cultural research. What, how, and where someone eats may give clues, for instance, of their customs and social standing. This relationship between food practices and financial status was discussed by Pierre Bourdieu, who, in the 1960s, examined restaurants of various price ranges in France because he believed that “oppositions similar in structure to those found in cultural practices also appear in eating habits.” (Bourdieu, 1984, p. 6)

In his work, *Distinction: A Social Critique of the Judgement of Taste*, he noted that the working class meals were characterized as being simple, affordable, filling, and with prompt service, while the upper class enjoyed meals with exotic ingredients, innovative presentation, and attentive waiters. The perception of abundance, particularly, is pivotal to symbolizing social class and cultural capital (Jurafsky et al., 2016), as expensive establishments provided a memorable culinary experience with an ambiance of sophistication, creatively curated menus, and attention to detail, and cheaper places were about feeling nourished. Bourdieu's research helped identify how economic and social factors play a pivotal role in shaping one's taste preferences, reflecting

various distinctions and disparities between groups and ultimately inspiring many more investigations related to food culture and the trends amongst places of different price ranges in particular, the basis for the study, titled: “Linguistic Markers of Status in Food Culture: Bourdieu’s Distinction in a Menu Corpus” (Jurafsky et al., 2016).

Applying Bourdieu’s findings to analyze a particular facet of restaurants, Jurafsky, Chahuneau, and Routledge analyzed the language of menus of food establishments with various price ranges from seven major cities in the United States to check if they were still valid more than fifty years later and in another country. These scholars found that expensive and cheap locales continued to follow the previously described trends, and they identified other linguistic strategies employed by these different groups. As society changes, so too has our relationship with food, reflecting shifts in resources and values (Liao, 2018). A study like this has not been done in the context of Puerto Rico. Hence, this research aims to fill this gap in knowledge by comparing two Puerto Rican restaurants’ menus in Spanish to determine if all of these linguistic markers of status will be present in this new time and environment and to what extent.

A similar study was carried out by Lakoff (2006), who conducted a comparative investigation centered on the menus of Chez Panisse, an upscale French restaurant, and Oriental Restaurant, a more budget-friendly option, both situated along the same street in Berkeley, California. The results of this demonstrated that menus could serve as valuable indicators of a restaurant's identity and dining experience. Chez Panisse's menu had a limited selection that underscored a commitment to quality over quantity and exhibited an air of sophistication, employing foreign terminology, limiting options, and creating an element of culinary mystery. In contrast,

Oriental Restaurant's menu offered a broader selection of dishes and included visual aids, such as pictures of the dishes, to enhance transparency and provide customers with a sense of control over their choices.

In this study, rather than juxtaposing food eateries of varying cost levels that are near each other and have disparate cuisines, two restaurants of the same price points, cuisine, and similar names, but in contrasting areas of Puerto Rico (Caguas, and San Juan), were used. Specifically, this work analyzed the menus of "Casita Vieja", in the city center of Caguas, located in the central-eastern region of the island, and "Casita Miramar", in Miramar, an upscale neighborhood in the capital city of Puerto Rico.

Both of these establishments have "casita" in their names, a word that translates to 'little house'. This name already provides information on the type of food and ambiance these places strive for: comfort food like those from any Puerto Rican home. It also makes reference to "fondas," or small inns, usually family-owned, that sell inexpensive authentic Puerto Rican comfort food. Notwithstanding the similarities between these restaurants, Casita Miramar has been called a "Fonda Chic" (Santiago, 2019). Is this just due to its location? Or does the language of its menu come into play? Will Bourdieu's distinctions on social class and culture capital be present in this new setting?

Justification for Research

This research departs from the premise established in Jurafsky et al.'s 2016 study, which analyzed menus from various American food establishments. However, the unique contribution of this research lies in its exploration of the Puerto Rican context. While the field of sociolinguis-

tics has seen significant research on the language of food, this island's unique, multicultural setting still needs to be addressed.

Existing research on the linguistic analysis of Puerto Rican eateries is limited, and although foundational knowledge, such as Bourdieu's (1984, 1986) theories on taste and social class, has been established, its direct application to language analysis in Puerto Rican restaurants has yet to be investigated. This study fills this research gap by shedding light on linguistic features used by this island's restaurant industry. Understanding these distinctions carries implications for comprehending cultural dynamics and refining business communication strategies. Consequently, this research can assist restaurants in effectively catering to their target audiences and enhancing their appeal by aligning their language choices with desired associations.

The proposed research holds academic significance by exposing the implications of the collected data for the existing theoretical frameworks surrounding cultural capital and language. This study assesses the alignment or deviation of the observed data from Bourdieu's model by examining linguistic markers within Puerto Rican restaurant menus in Spanish.

Research Questions and Hypotheses

This essay investigates the linguistic markers of class within Puerto Rican restaurant menus, focusing on two specific restaurants in Puerto Rico, "Casita Miramar" in San Juan and "Casita Vieja" in Caguas. Building upon the theoretical framework proposed by Bourdieu and the concept of social distinction, the research seeks to address the following questions:

1. Are there any noticeable lexical differences between the menus of these two restaurants?
2. Do these distinctions mirror the patterns identified by previous studies in other countries?

To what extent?

The menus are expected to exhibit discernible trends and variations in language choice, reflecting the influence of cultural and social background.

Our analysis is built upon a set of hypotheses, which we will now introduce.

Hypothesis 1: Casita Miramar's menu presents linguistic features associated with higher social class position due to its location and target audience, including tourists and locals.

Hypothesis 2: The observed linguistic markers of class within Puerto Rican restaurant menus demonstrate alignment with Bourdieu's conceptualization of social distinction.

Hypothesis 3: The linguistic markers of class within Puerto Rican restaurant menus exhibit similarities and differences compared to the findings from Jurafsky et al.'s 2016 study on linguistic markers of status in food culture.

We state that, while there may be overlapping linguistic patterns, the unique cultural and linguistic context of Puerto Rico will contribute to specific variations in the linguistic markers of status within the menus.

Literature Review

The study of linguistic signs in food menus has gained considerable attention in recent years due to its relevance in understanding the associations between language, status, and culinary experiences. Menus, as cultural artifacts, play a crucial role in shaping customers' impressions of restaurants. The language choices within menus can convey a range of meanings, including social hierarchies, cultural associations, and perceived prestige. One of the pillar researchers on this topic is Dan Jurafsky (2011, 2014, 2015, 2016), whose articles on food studies span a multitude of topics, not just on the language of restaurants but on other food items such as snacks, namely, bags of chips.

In “Authenticity in America: Class Distinctions in Potato Chip Advertising,” Freedman and Jurafsky (2011) analyzed cheap versus expensive bags of chips across the U.S. and the language used to advertise them. Their main discovery revealed these to be markers of authenticity, which, according to some, have been the centerpiece of contemporary marketing (Beverland, 2005), and whose use has doubled when referring to food and dining in the last twenty years (Carroll & Wheaton, 2009). Johnston and Bauman (2007) evidenced this by noting that upscale food magazines presented food as authentic by discussing where it was produced and whether it was done by hand instead of industrial equipment. Moreover, the potato chip study categorized two types of authenticity. Freedman and Jurafsky found that expensive chip advertising focused on “natural” authenticity, emphasizing the origin and quality of the ingredients (such as “sea salt” and “Yukon Gold potatoes”) and the artisanal processing (hand-raking every batch). Words like “natural” and “organic” were also frequently used. On the other hand, advertising for less expensive chips followed a different pattern, termed “traditional” authenticity, which linked food to family members, historical roots, and traditions. This distinction between “natural” and “traditional” authenticity was then added as one of the aspects of the Bourdieu-style analysis of menus.

There are plethora of ways to analyze menus, not just through their language usage, but for their weight, background color, font, and even images (Magnini & Kim, 2017). For instance, in “Do pictures help? The effects of pictures and food names on menu evaluations”, Magnini & Kim (2017) reveal that menu items with common descriptive food names are more likely to be purchased if these have pictures, but meal items with ambiguous names are better received without images. This can be associated with status markers because, usually, less expensive menus

are the ones with images, while menus for the upper class could rely on complicated language to show off their knowledge.

In fact, educational capital is another one of the aspects examined in "Linguistic Markers of Status in Food Culture: Bourdieu's Distinction in a Menu Corpus." As education is linked with one's socioeconomic status, upscale restaurants, much like other luxury product advertisers, might employ more sophisticated vocabulary— using rarer words that possess greater morphological complexity, or that are borrowed from 'higher-status' foreign languages so that consumers can demonstrate a shared sense of knowledge and social status.

However, if menus are stacked with multiple complex descriptors or adjectives, they can relate to different audiences in different ways. Bourdieu (1986) observed that the middle and lower-class establishments demonstrated insecurity in their products and, therefore, were more explicit in advertising them, as opposed to more expensive locales that had an implicit signaling of the quality of their products. In "Modification as Social Anxiety" (2004), Liberman's exploration of three Philadelphia restaurants (low-priced, mid-priced, and high-priced) also aligns with this notion of middle-class anxiety. He observed that the middle-priced restaurant had the most verbose menu, using descriptive language like "Big Juicy Burger of Buck Run Farm's Grass Fed Beef on our House made Poppy Seed Bun." According to Liberman, this wordiness serves as a class indicator and reflects status anxiety, evident in the excessive embellishments with words like "juicy" or "peppery." This idea is further bolstered by game-theory research on advertising, suggesting that middle-priced firms tend to employ explicit advertising, while high-priced ones lean towards implicit or "modest" advertising as a form of "counter-signaling" to distinguish themselves from their middle-priced counterparts (Jurafsky et al., 2016, p.6).

Lastly, food is a symbol of culture. “One way to establish that a person is not a member of a certain cultural group is through diet” (Kittler et al., 2012, p.5). Many menus use cultural references in their dishes' names, which could also create a network of associations with specific groups of consumers. For instance, “Food for Thought: A Linguistic Analysis of the Menus in Karachi’s Elite Cafes and Restaurants” (2019) details how Pakistan’s capital’s pricey food venues tend to name their menu items with foreign terminology that strays away from Pakistani culture and caters to a younger, international generation. They do so through various strategies such as referencing violence (“dynamite chicken”), high-class brand names (such as names of luxury cars for cocktails), using abhorring terms (“rattlesnake salad”), attaching adjectives that usually do not collocate with food (“crazy maki”, “dynamite chicken”) instead of the typical pairings that enhance appetite (“crispy”, “delicious,”), using the names of foreign fictional characters (“Hobbit chicken”), or non-native geographical locations (“Mexican burger”, “Italian omelet”), and other labeling approaches.

Menus that employ cultural references or specific names in their dishes can clue into whom they are representing and whom they cater to, which in the case of this study could be either for the general Puerto Rican population or for non-natives. As the field of menu analysis continues to evolve, synthesizing the research conducted by Bourdieu, Jurafsky, and other scholars becomes essential for a comprehensive understanding of linguistic markers within restaurant menus.

Research Design and Methodology:

Gathering Data from Restaurant Menus

The research design of this study involves a qualitative approach to analyze the linguistic markers of status in the menus of "Casita Miramar" and "Casita Vieja", two restaurants in Puerto Rico. Qualitative research allows for an in-depth exploration of the language choices, descriptions, cultural references, and symbolic elements within the menus, providing a nuanced understanding of the linguistic strategies employed to convey status associations (Özdemir & Nebioğlu, 2018). The menus of these restaurants were analyzed using the four factors identified by Jurafsky and Bourdieu: "plenty", educational capital, implicit signaling of quality, and natural vs. traditional authenticity. The process involved systematic data collection and careful examination of the language used in the menus.

The gathered menus underwent a meticulous analysis using the identified factors. The concept of "plenty" was explored by analyzing the descriptions of dishes, the presence of words or phrases that conveyed abundance and generosity in portion sizes, and the number of food dish options. Educational capital was assessed by evaluating the length of words (longer words were classified as more complex) and the use of specialized culinary or foreign terminology. Implicit quality was examined by analyzing the adjectives used to describe the dishes' taste, ingredients, preparation methods, and presentation. Lastly, references to authenticity refer to how the restaurants portrayed their cuisine in terms of cultural heritage and traditional cooking methods.

Why These Restaurants?

In selecting the restaurants for this study, a deliberate choice was made to focus on two establishments of the same cuisine and price range, but situated in contrasting locations within Puerto Rico. One restaurant was in a touristy and expensive area frequented by visitors, while the other was in a regular town, catering primarily to locals. The aim was to examine if the perceived

higher social class status could be attributed to language usage, even when offering the same cuisine and similar cost.

Extra Factors to Analyze

In addition to the four factors identified by Jurafsky and Bourdieu, this study also incorporated the analysis of supplementary factors, such as any cultural reference that manifests Puerto Rican culinary heritage and identity, encompassing traditional ingredients, local sourcing, cooking methods, and cultural symbols as linguistic markers of status and authenticity. Moreover, the study delves into code-switching, the intentional or unconscious use of multiple languages or language varieties within menu descriptions, as a fascinating and relevant aspect to explore. In summary, this research adopts a comprehensive approach to collect and analyze restaurant menus systematically, scrutinizing the factors established by Jurafsky et al. (2016) and Bourdieu (1986), while delving into the impact of location, code-switching and other important differences such as illustrations on the linguistic markers of status in the distinctive menus of Puerto Rican restaurants.

Results

Regarding "natural authenticity" language, or terminology that emphasizes the origin, quality, and artisanal processing of food, Casita Miramar has eight references: "de temporada," (seasonal), "hecho en casa," (homemade) "fresca," (fresh), two "de la finca" (from the farm), and four uses of "local." "Casita Vieja" only had one "de finca" and one "local." Meanwhile, Casita Miramar had two "traditional authenticity" markers, using the word "tradicional." Casita Vieja had four verbal "traditional" references: "del campo," "jíbaro," "campo style," "jíbara," and a traditional non-verbal reference in the restaurant's logo, which includes conventional Puerto Ri-

can imagery of the historic Puerto Rican home, a “jíbaro” or traditional rural worker, the national flower, the island’s flag, a plantain tree and pig being cooked on a skewer. “Del campo,” which can be translated to “from the countryside,” is not used as a “natural authenticity” marker, like “de finca”, because its context carries connotations of the classic Puerto Rican countryside, as opposed to a specific farm a product was picked at. Therefore, Casita Miramar's markers are more associated with natural authenticity, and Casita Vieja's correlates more with traditional authenticity. These noticeable lexical differences between the menus confirm the hypotheses stating that Casita Miramar presents higher-status linguistic features and associations that both go in accordance with Jurafsky et al. (2016) and Bourdieu’s (1986) ideas.

The restaurant's perceived elegance was also associated with educational capital. “Fancy” language aims to impress readers, subtly flattering their intelligence when they grasp complex or foreign terms, creating a sense of shared understanding. Word length shows a strong inverse correlation with word frequency and a positive link to complexity, resulting in longer words being both rare and intricate (Jurafsky et al., 2016). Casita Miramar had an average content word length of 6.9 characters, using complex words such as “ajilimojili,” “escabeche,” “rostizado,” and “confitadas.” In contrast, Casita Vieja had an average content word length of 6.5 characters, shortening words like “chimichurri” (used in Casita Miramar’s) to “chimi” or “three-cheese” to “3 cheese.”

Furthermore, Casita Miramar referred to foreign, more high-status words or concepts such as “vinagreta,” “a la Gallega,” “Español” (as in, “of Spain”), and “baguette,” a word of French origin, a language that has historically been considered of sophistication and high status and has therefore tends to be used in upper-class establishments.

Contrary to Casita Miramar, Casita Vieja referenced Puerto Rican names and places: Cabo Rojo and Arecibo are both cities on the island, “de río” translates to “from the river,” “Borinquen” is this island’s indigenous name, “malecón” signposts to a waterfront promenade, popular for leisurely walks and socializing, often featuring amenities like restaurants and shops, and “kikirí veinte” references Puerto Rican roosters and the onomatopoeic representation of their crowing. Again, this proves the hypotheses right, with Casita Miramar exhibiting more educational capital features than Casita Vieja.

Within the framework of “plenty”, Casita Miramar had fewer options, providing 30 dishes overall, separated into three categories: “aperitivos,” “platos principales,” and “acompañantes.” Casita Vieja, on the other hand, presented more options with 69 food items divided into eight categories: “aperitivos,” “sugerencias del chef,” “de la tierra,” “aves de la granja,” “frutos del mar,” “sopas y ensaladas,” and “postres.” Moreover, Casita Vieja made use of the vocabulary of ‘choice’ with words and descriptions such as “variedad a escoger” (‘variety to choose from’), “añade” (‘add’), “puede salir con... o” (‘can go with... or’).

Adjectives were more prevalent in Casita Miramar’s menu, with fourteen describing the cooking style (“frito,” “empanado,” “ahumado,” “añejo,” and so on), four signaling quality (“prime,” and “especial”), and four sensorial evocations (“cremosas,” “crujiente,” and “frío”). Casita Vieja, meanwhile, had thirteen cooking style adjectives (“salteados,” “al fango”), two sensorial (“crispy,” “crujiente”), and one on taste (“dulce”). So far, this distinction is the only one that does not mirror the results of previous studies. However, some form of lexical variation was expected due to the unique cultural context of Puerto Rico, as mentioned in the third hypothesis.

Another factor found was instances of Spanish-to-English code-switching. Casita Miramar has an all-English menu but still uses the word “prime” in various cases on the Spanish menu. Casita Vieja only has a Spanish menu but uses numerous English words in their descriptions, like “cheese,” “burger,” “honey mustard,” “crispy,” “cheesecake,” “pork belly,” “steak,” “smoked,” “style,” “grill,” “salad,” “bacon,” “bites,” “mini,” “rum,” “corned-beef,” and “chutney.”

Overall, the menus of these two restaurants have salient linguistic contrasts, and they mirror the patterns of past studies executed in other contexts, although not to the full extent. All three hypotheses were proven right. Casita Miramar’s menu exhibits linguistic features normally associated with upper-class establishments, and Casita Vieja presents choices attuned to more inexpensive restaurants. These findings align with Bourdieu’s conceptualization of social class distinction, and there was a major overlap in the trends distinguished by Jurafsky, Chahuneau, Routledge, and Smith in North American menus.

Discussion

Three of the four distinctions proposed by Jurafsky et al. 2016 were reflected in comparing these two restaurants’ linguistic markers of status—only failing to mimic the results in terms of signaling quality. Even so, there are some facts to consider, such as the amount of decorum in the menu that is not explicitly a one-word adjective or phrase. For instance, “frutos del mar,” that is ‘fruits of the sea’, or “aves de la granja” (‘birds from the farm’) are unnecessarily verbose and could portray anxiety for a more stylized menu. Freedman and Jurafsky (2011) found that more expensive chips not only used more complex words than cheaper ones, but they were also wordier in general. Casita Miramar’s menu has a total of 206 content words compared to Casita

Vieja's, which has 325. Therefore, although Casita Miramar use more adjectives to signal quality, it could be said that Casita Vieja use a similar strategy to make their dishes seem more appetizing.

Furthermore, Jurafsky et al. (2016) discovered that the type of adjectives used by restaurants could also be indicative of their status. Lower to middle-priced restaurants strongly favor sensory adjectives ("crispy," "smoky"), and the most inexpensive restaurants employ positive sentimental adjectives ("excellent," "great") and positive food adjectives ("delicious," "tasty"). A possible explanation for the lack of these adjectives in these menus could be that Casita Miramar and Casita Vieja are considered to be more middle-priced establishments (both identifying their Facebook pages with two dollar signs out of four in the price range section), and adjectival attestations to quality are used less in more expensive restaurants. However, this aspect needs further research to find out if the limited use of adjectives is a common trend in Puerto Rican menus or just these two.

Casita Miramar exhibited higher educational capital in their use of longer and foreign words. Longer words tend to be more complex and rare, and adding these to menus gives customers the opportunity to showcase their intellect. A section of the menus of these restaurants that could add to this distinction of status, but was not linguistically analyzed, is the drinks offered. Casita Miramar has separate menus for wines and cocktails, while Casita Vieja only has one menu that included eleven non-alcoholic drink options. Alcoholic beverages could be another factor that elevates the perceived sophistication of places for various reasons, starting with the fact that businesses need to purchase licenses to be able to market these.

Having a wine selection expands the educational and cultural capital embedded in menus. Silverstein (2003) noted that aspirational elites use more complex and rare wine-tasting jargon (“oinoglossia”) when discussing wines to highlight their prestige. Ergo, this feature in their menu further promotes Casita Miramar to a higher status, whereas Casita Vieja keeps up the image of the traditional “fonda” that focuses on providing comfort food and ambiance and does not worry about using pretentious language. According to Douglas and Isherwood (2002), goods are primarily “needed for making visible and stable the categories of culture... all material possessions carry social meanings” (p. 38). Applying this idea to the context of menus, having an extra category of products to consume can upgrade the overall restaurant experience.

When it comes to food, however, more options can lead to the opposite impression. Casita Miramar has “plenty” of drink options, which may augment the restaurant-going experience to encompass elements of conviviality and social engagement, transcending the mere act of dining. Conversely, Casita Vieja strives to create an ambiance of culinary abundance, enticing diners to satisfy their hunger to their heart’s content. Through the systematic categorization of food groups into diverse sections, surpassing the conventional demarcation of “main plates” and “appetizers,” and by offering patrons the liberty to customize their dishes with preferred additions or select ingredients and cooking techniques, this restaurant demonstrates a pronounced emphasis on satiation, not sophistication.

Regarding the discourse surrounding the notion of authenticity, both restaurants' menus feature substantial references to “natural authenticity.” Notably, Casita Miramar utilizes a greater number of descriptors accentuating the utilization of fresh and unprocessed ingredients, but both Casita Miramar and Casita Vieja underscore that their products are locally sourced. Casita Vieja

do so even when explicit markers of this type of authenticity are not employed by denoting city names or referencing river origins and other such techniques. In Puerto Rico, despite the agricultural sector constituting less than 1% of the local economy, persistent efforts are being made to promote the production and consumption of locally grown foods. A burgeoning movement has emerged, spearheaded by consumers, local governments, and the private sector, which fervently advocates for the patronage of foods bearing the label “Made in Puerto Rico” (Marrero et al., 2021). This movement revolves around a deliberate focus on nutrition, climate resilience, and the preservation of cultural farming heritage and might be reflected in some of the island’s menus.

Casita Vieja incorporates authenticity markers that necessitate cultural capital for complete comprehension. This stems from the use of dish names containing references to Puerto Rican culture, which might be less accessible to non-natives. This starkly contrasts the study discussed in the literature review, where elite cafes in Pakistan's capital targeted outsiders and tourists rather than the Pakistani population (Ali, 2019). Casita Vieja proudly presents its Puerto Rican cuisine as originating from Puerto Rico and tailored for Puerto Ricans. To substantiate these findings, further investigation is warranted to ascertain whether this pattern is specific to more budget-friendly restaurants or if it extends to places in the capitals of countries, where there may be a more diverse international clientele to cater to.

Similarly, a noteworthy aspect that warrants further investigation to discern underlying patterns, particularly within the local context, is code-switching. The prevalence of loanwords in Puerto Rico is striking, wherein a multitude of English words have seamlessly integrated into everyday conversation, including certain terms evident in Casita Vieja's menu, such as "cheesecake," "bacon," "mini," and others. Casita Miramar, situated in a tourist-heavy area, features an

English-only menu to cater to its diverse clientele. In contrast, Casita Vieja, found at the city center of Caguas, primarily serves locals, obviating the need for English in their menu. Plausibly, this linguistic approach could be a strategic portrayal of the restaurant as more colloquial, aligning with how the average Puerto Rican employs language. This linguistic choice represents yet another facet of the restaurant's emphasis on the culinary experience rather than an overt display of sophistication.

Casita Miramar's menu featured a minimalist design with no images and a single background color. On the other hand, Casita Vieja displayed a vibrant decor with multiple colors and classic Puerto Rican imagery in the background of their menus. Numerous studies have investigated the impact of incorporating imagery on food menus, considering factors such as picture saturation, quantity, and placement to enhance sales, yielding varying results (Al-Juboori & Al Saleem, 2012; Liu et al., 2022). While the inclusion of pictures may potentially boost sales, this is commonly associated with cheaper establishments, leading higher-end restaurants to avoid them (Wright & Ransom, 2005; Hou et al., 2017). Consequently, this aspect contributes to the perceived difference in status presentation between the two restaurants, further accentuating the relatively more affordable perception associated with Casita Vieja.

Conclusions

The study reveals that Casita Miramar utilizes language emphasizing natural, locally sourced, fresh, and authentically traditional Puerto Rican cuisine to project an image of sophistication and appeal to tourists. In contrast, Casita Vieja employs a straightforward menu style with ample food options lacking extensive explanations, appealing to a general Puerto Rican consumer base.

The linguistic markers employed by the two selected restaurants serve as effective communicative tools that reflect not only their intended target audience but also the cultural associations they seek to establish and the desired culinary image they aim to project. This study set out to address two primary research questions: the presence of noticeable lexical differences between the menus of these two restaurants and the extent to which these distinctions resonate with patterns observed in previous studies conducted in diverse cultural and geographical contexts.

In concluding our investigation, it becomes evident that discernible lexical differences do indeed exist between the menus of Casita Miramar and Casita Vieja. While these differences share certain resonances with the trends identified in previous studies by scholars such as Jurafsky (2011, 2016) and Lakoff (2006), they also exhibit distinctive variations that are emblematic of the unique Puerto Rican cultural and linguistic context prevalent in the year 2023. Each of the three hypotheses presented in this study has been substantiated through this analysis.

The first hypothesis, which posited that the menu of Casita Miramar would be characterized by linguistic features associated with higher social class due to its prime location in the capital city and its diverse clientele encompassing both tourists and locals, is supported by the alignment of three out of the four proposed linguistic status distinctions formulated by Jurafsky et al. (2016) and based on Bourdieu's framework. Notably, aspects related to prestige and educational capital are consistently reflected in the linguistic choices of Casita Miramar, reinforcing its perception as a more prestigious establishment. This impression is further bolstered by visual cues in the menu.

In particular, the dichotomy between natural and traditional authenticity markers emerged as a pivotal analytical lens through which the menus of these restaurants were examined. Casita

Miramar exhibits a conspicuous prevalence of natural authenticity markers, signifying an emphasis on freshness, local sourcing, and artisanal processes. This discourse aligns with contemporary culinary trends that spotlight the provenance of ingredients and eco-conscious gastronomy. Conversely, Casita Vieja predominantly employs traditional authenticity markers, thereby evoking a sense of cultural heritage and nostalgic familiarity encapsulated within the realm of Puerto Rican comfort cuisine. The pronounced prevalence of these markers in each establishment's menu underscores their strategic communication of distinct culinary identities and aligns with the broader framework of socio-cultural semiotics inherent in gastronomic contexts.

The second hypothesis, suggesting that linguistic markers of class within Puerto Rican restaurant menus would be in concordance with Bourdieu's conceptual framework of social distinction, finds empirical support in the presence of these markers in both menus. The persistence of Bourdieu's framework, particularly his delineation of "plenty," within the Puerto Rican context, underscores the enduring applicability of his sociological insights in understanding contemporary culinary dynamics.

The third hypothesis, which anticipated both parallels and deviations in the linguistic markers of class within Puerto Rican menus in comparison to the findings of Jurafsky et al.'s 2016 study, is validated through the identification of analogous linguistic markers imbued with context-specific nuances. While several markers echo those identified in the previous study, variations emerge, particularly in the domain of "implicit signaling of quality." This deviation may stem from various factors, including cultural inclinations or the middle-priced positioning of both Casita Miramar and Casita Vieja.

In summary, the nuanced linguistic choices evident in the menus of Casita Miramar and Casita Vieja emerge as potent tools for conveying their intended social standing and culinary character. These findings harmonize with Bourdieu's theoretical framework of class distinction while concurrently embracing specific cultural idiosyncrasies of Puerto Rico. As the gastronomic landscape continually evolves and intersects with cultural, social, and economic dynamics, this study contributes to the ongoing scholarly dialogue surrounding the intricate interplay between linguistic markers, social class, and culinary identities.

Contributions and Implications

This research essay on the linguistic markers of status in Puerto Rican food menus significantly contributes to linguistics, culture, and food studies. Additionally, it has practical implications for restaurant owners, marketers, and policymakers in Puerto Rico. The following are the key contributions and implications of this research:

1. Academic Contributions:

- Linguistics: The study contributes to linguistics by exploring the role of language in conveying status associations and cultural identity in food menus. It expands our understanding of how linguistic markers can shape perceptions, target specific audiences, and differentiate restaurants within a culinary context.
- Cultural Studies: It examines the socio-cultural context and linguistic markers in Puerto Rican food menus, adds to the knowledge of culinary identity, cultural values, and historical influences, and it enhances our understanding of how language reflects and reinforces cultural expectations, values, and perceptions within the Puerto Rican food culture.

- Food Studies: The research contributes to food studies by providing insights into the linguistic strategies employed in menus and their implications for the dining experience. It highlights the interplay between language, culture, and culinary innovation, offering a deeper understanding of the relationship between linguistic markers and status associations in the food industry.

2. Practical Implications:

The findings of this study offer tangible insights with practical implications for restaurant owners and marketers across Puerto Rico. By discerning the linguistic markers that distinguish “Casita Miramar” and “Casita Vieja,” these professionals can refine their menu strategies to convey effectively their intended brand identity to their target audience. This strategic approach to menu design can significantly enhance customer engagement, enrich the dining experience, and ultimately elevate customer satisfaction.

Beyond the realm of individual establishments, the implications of this research extend to the domain of Puerto Rican policymakers who play a pivotal role in advancing and sustaining the local culinary industry. The study underscores the pivotal importance of preserving and promoting the cultural identity and authenticity inherent within Puerto Rican cuisine, both as a source of local pride and a driver of tourism and economic growth. Armed with the knowledge gleaned from this research, policymakers can formulate thoughtful regulations and innovative initiatives that actively encourage and incentivize the use of locally sourced ingredients, the application of traditional cooking methods, and the strategic integration of linguistic markers that poignantly accentuate Puerto Rico's distinctive culinary heritage.

In embracing these implications, restaurateurs, marketers, and policymakers alike have the opportunity to collectively contribute to the vibrant tapestry of Puerto Rico's culinary landscape, fostering a richer and more authentic dining experience for locals and visitors alike. The harmonious convergence of cultural resonance, linguistic finesse, and gastronomic excellence holds the promise of not only enriching the dining encounter but also nurturing the broader socio-economic fabric of the island.

Limitations and Future Research

Despite this study's valuable insights, some limitations and constraints should be acknowledged. These limitations provide opportunities for future research and further investigation. The following are the limitations encountered during this study:

1. **Sample Size:** The study relied on a limited number of menus from two specific restaurants in Puerto Rico. Although efforts were made to select representative menus, the sample size might only partially capture the diversity of linguistic markers and status associations within the broader Puerto Rican food culture. Future research could benefit from a more extensive and diverse sample of menus, including restaurants from different regions of Puerto Rico and varying price ranges.
2. **Contextual Factors:** The study focused primarily on the linguistic analysis of menus without considering other contextual factors that may influence customer perceptions and behavior. Restaurant ambiance, customer reviews, and service quality contribute to the overall status associations and customer experiences. Future research could incorporate a more comprehensive approach, considering these contextual factors to gain a more holistic understanding of the impact of linguistic markers on food menus.

3. Customer Perceptions: This study primarily examined the linguistic markers in menus and their potential associations with status. However, it did not directly explore customer perceptions or gather feedback on their interpretations of the linguistic markers. Future research could include customer surveys, interviews, or focus groups to gain insights into how customers perceive and interpret the linguistic markers in menus and how these perceptions influence their dining decisions. By engaging with diners directly, researchers can uncover nuanced insights into how customers perceive and interpret the linguistic cues embedded in menus. Through open-ended discussions or structured surveys, participants could provide valuable feedback on their impressions of menu language, whether it influences their perception of quality and status, and how these perceptions contribute to their overall dining experience. Incorporating data from online customer review platforms, such as Yelp or TripAdvisor, could also enrich the investigation. These platforms offer a wealth of real-world, unfiltered feedback from a diverse range of patrons. Analyzing customer reviews in conjunction with the linguistic markers identified in menus could reveal patterns in how certain phrases or descriptors are resonating with customers. This approach has been successfully employed in previous studies (Jurafsky et al. 2014; Cuperly 2017), enabling researchers to uncover correlations between linguistic markers, customer perceptions, and satisfaction levels. By integrating these customer-centric methodologies, future research could bridge the gap between linguistic analysis and real-world customer experiences, providing a comprehensive understanding of how menu language shapes perceptions, influences dining decisions, and contributes to the success of a restaurant.

4. Restaurant owners and service personnel: A notable limitation of this study is the absence of insights from restaurant owners and service personnel. While this research focused on analyzing the linguistic markers within the menus of Casita Miramar and Casita Vieja, it lacked the perspectives of those directly involved in crafting the menus and delivering the dining experience. The perspective of restaurant owners could provide valuable insights into their intentions behind menu language choices and their aspirations for conveying a certain status image to their patrons. Additionally, incorporating the viewpoint of waitstaff and service personnel could offer a more holistic understanding of how linguistic strategies interact with the overall dining experience. A study conducted by Liao (2018), titled "A Squirt of Ketchup and a Dollop of Remoulade: The Linguistics of Restaurant Service," explored the role of waitstaff in shaping the dining experience. Liao's findings indicated that the interplay between food, waitstaff interactions, and menu language collaboratively contributes to the establishment's overall image and the customers' perceptions of quality and status. Comparing the intentions of restaurant owners and the impact of service interactions with the linguistic markers identified in this study could yield valuable insights into whether the desired status associations are effectively conveyed to customers. It could also shed light on the extent to which waitstaff interactions complement or reinforce the linguistic cues present in the menus. By adopting a more comprehensive approach that encompasses the perspectives of all stakeholders involved, future research could provide a more complete understanding of the complex dynamics that shape the dining experience and the linguistic strategies used to project status and authenticity.

5. **Menu Design and Layout:** Another potential avenue for future research is to explore the impact of menu design and layout on customer perceptions of status and cultural authenticity. Investigating font styles, colors, organization, and visual elements could help to better understand how these design choices interact with linguistic markers to shape customer perceptions and preferences.
6. **Comparative Analysis:** This study focused on the linguistic markers of menus from different types of Puerto Rican restaurants. However, future research could expand the scope by conducting comparative analyses across different regional cuisines or international food cultures. Comparing linguistic markers in menus from diverse culinary contexts would offer insights into linguistic markers' universality or cultural specificity in conveying status associations.

In conclusion, this study has provided valuable insights into the linguistic markers that underscore status associations within Puerto Rican food menus. However, it is important to acknowledge certain limitations inherent in this research endeavor. While the chosen restaurants, Casita Miramar and Casita Vieja, offer valuable perspectives, expanding the sample size to include a broader range of establishments across different regions of Puerto Rico could yield a more comprehensive and nuanced understanding of linguistic patterns.

Moreover, future investigations could delve deeper into the contextual factors that influence menu language, such as local culinary traditions, historical influences, and evolving food trends. Exploring customer perceptions and reactions to linguistic choices could offer a dynamic dimension to our comprehension, shedding light on how menu language influences the dining experience.

The study of menu design and layout also remains an intriguing avenue for further exploration. Investigating how visual and spatial elements interact with linguistic markers to shape customer perceptions could provide a more holistic understanding of the complex interplay between aesthetics, language, and status signaling. Furthermore, conducting cross-cultural and cross-temporal comparative analyses could enrich our insights by identifying universal linguistic trends and delineating culturally specific variations. This would enable us to discern the extent to which linguistic markers and status associations transcend geographical and temporal boundaries.

In essence, this study serves as a stepping stone for future inquiries into the intricate realm of menu linguistics. By addressing these limitations and venturing into unexplored domains, subsequent research endeavors can expand our horizons, offering a more robust understanding of how language shapes culinary experiences, cultural authenticity, and perceptions of social distinction. Through continued exploration and scholarly endeavor, we can aspire to unravel the fascinating tapestry of linguistic subtleties that contribute to the multifaceted world of food menus.

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Appendix

I. Casita Miramar menu

Menus

Todo plato están sujetos a la disponibilidad de temporada

APERITIVOS

Alcapurrias

cambian todas las semanas.

Queso Frito y Mermelada de Temporada

Queso frito tradicional con Mermelada de Fruto Local de Temporada

Buñuelos con Chorizo y Alioli

Buñuelos de Malanga y Chorizo Con Alioli de Mostaza.

Croquetas de Bacalao

Croquetas cremosas de Bacalao, Guiso de Garbanzos y Berenjena

Empanadillas del Día

Empanadillas cambian todas las semanas.

Ensalada de Requesón y Tomates

Requesón hecho en Casa, Tomate local, Vinagreta de Orégano y Miel; Pistachos.

Chicharrones de Dorado

Chicharrones de Dorado Empanados y side de Ranch Criolla.

El Antojito de Cleon

Arroz Pegao, Ensalada de Pepinos, Tomate, Aguacate y Atún Fresco

Pulpo a la Gallega

Servido Frio

Crudo del día

PLATOS PRINCIPALES

Pollo Borracho

Guiso de Pollo con Cerveza Local, Papas y Zanahoria

Patitas con Garbanzo

Tradicional receta de las Casitas.

Ensalada de Pollo de Casita con Ajilimojili.

Pechuga a la Parrilla, Ensalada de la Finca, Salsa Ajilimojili

Duo de Carne Frita y Ahumada

Carne frita con Ajillo, Cebolla Lilas.

Pastelón de Día

Especial de la Semana

Cabruto

Guiso de Cabro Local con Vino Tinto.

Empanada del Jefe

Pechuga de Pollo Empanada con Cremosa Salsa de Chorizo.

Costillas BBQ De China Mandarina

Costillas Ahumadas, con BBQ de China Mandarina y Jengibre, Con Ensalada de Repollo y Lechosa.

Churrasco Prime 12oz

Churrasco Prime 12oz con Chimichurri de Recao de la Finca.

Aguacate Relleno de Mariscos

Escabeche de Camarones, Pulpo Español, Dorado y Mejillones, Ensalada Local y Aguacate.

Carnes con Papas

Prime Bone in Ribeye con Salsa de Hierbas y Ron Añejo. Acompañado de Papas Confitadas con Aceite de Romero y Ajo Rostizado.

Filete de Pescado

Salsa Especial del Día

Pescado Entero

Sale con Escabeche de Cebolla

Acompañantes

Tostadas de Baguette Arroz Del Día Mamposteados Crujientes con Habichuelas Blancas Tostones de Plátano o Pana Ensalada Casita Yuca al Mojo Ensalada de Aguacate

II. Casita Vieja Menu

Sugerencias del Chef

- **Risotto de Finca.....\$23.00**
(3 Cheese, Setas, Carne Ahumada, Sofrito, NY Strip)
- **Tacos al Pastor de Berenjena.....\$13.50**
(Refrito de Viandas, Piña, Cebolla, Cilantro + Platanutres)
- **Pasta del Campo.....\$18.99**
(Carbonara, Longaniza, Carne Ahumada, Pollo, Arena de Chicharrón + Tostones)
Añade Camarones por \$4.00
- **Jíbaro Burger.....\$14.99**
(Pastrami, Maduros, Suizo, Honey Mustard, Crispy Onion + Fritas)
- **Rompe Colchón 7 Potencias.....\$29.00**
(Calamar, Pulpo, Camarones, Mejillones, Almejitas de Cabo Rojo, Cangrejo de Río, Pescado)
- **Porcheta Rellena de Carne Ahumada.....\$29.00**
(Mojo de Sofrito + Risotto Mi Casita)

Postres

- Chessecake de la Casa
- Borinquen (Bizcocho de Batata)
- Tocino del Cielo

De la Tierra

- **Pork Belly.....\$18.00**
(Campo Style o Honey Smoked)
- **Filete de Lomo Ahumado en Leña de Mangó.....\$18.00**
(Chutney de Piña, Clavos de Olor)
- **Churrasco a la Brasa 10 oz.....\$27.00**
- **Churrasco a la Brasa 12 oz.....\$31.00**
- **Chicharrones de Cerdo.....\$13.99**
- **Empanada de Res.....\$15.99**
- **Chuletas de Cordero.....\$28.00**
- **Mofongo Relleno de Churrasco.....\$29.00**
- **1/2 Conejo a la Brasa...\$23.00**
(Sujeto a disponibilidad)
- **Short Ribs Angus.....\$29.00**
- **NY Steak \$33.00**
- **Rib Eye 16oz.....\$41.00**

Frutos del Mar

- **Mofongo del Mar.....\$28.00**
(Camarones, Calamar, Mejillones, Pulpo, Pescado)
- **Filete de Salmón a la Brasa.....\$23.00**
(Mermelada de ají dulce y mandarina Local)
- **Chillo Frito de P.R.\$27.00 x libra**
- **Filete de Mero Cabrilla de P.R.\$28.00**
- **Mofongo Relleno de Camarones.....\$25.00**
- **Filete de Dorado.....\$20.00**
- **Asopao de Camarones con Tostones.....\$25.00**

Aves de la Granja

- **Pechuga al Grill.....\$15.99**
(Puede Salir a la Carbonara, al Chimi, en Salsa de Guayaba o Escabeche de Cebolla)
- **Empanada de Pollo.....\$16.99**
- **Chicharrones de Pollo.....\$13.99**
- **Mofongo Relleno de Pollo.....\$19.50**

Complementos

- Arroz Blanco con Tocino y Habichuela
- Mampostead de Habichuelas
- Mampostead de Gandules
- Mampostead de Congri
- Majado de Vianda
- Salad
- Tostones
- Amarillos
- Papas Fritas
-
- **Arroz Mi Casita.....\$5.50 ADD**
- **Casita Salad.....\$5.50 ADD**
- **Risotto.....\$6.00 ADD**
(Variedad a Escoger)
- **Risotto Mi Casita.....\$8.00 ADD**
- **Vegetales Salteados.....\$5.00 ADD**
- **Papas Salteadas.....\$5.00 ADD**
- **Mofongo.....\$4.50 ADD**
- **BiFongo.....\$4.50 ADD**

Aviso: Consumir alimentos crudos o parcialmente cocidos puede ser perjudicial para la salud.